



DODGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Dale J Schmidt Sheriff **Scott Mittelstadt** Chief Deputy

September Sheriff's Column - Help us keep everyone safe at crash scenes.

Do you know what you should do and what you should be watching for when you come upon a crash scene on our roadways?

The first and most important thing for you to do when approaching a crash is to immediately slow down. Visibility is often limited or obstructed at these scenes and you need time to react to what may be ahead. Slowing down does not mean slowing by only 5 or 10 mph, but make a significant reduction in your speed. If you are on the highway where the speed limit is 55 or 65 mph, an appropriate safe speed when driving past emergency workers walking on the side of the road may be 25 or 35 mph. Our lives and safety depend on you giving us a safe place to work.

The next most important thing to remember is to look for the law enforcement officer or person directing traffic. Many people want to see what happened and pay more attention to the scene trying to see what happened than watching that person who is trying to get you through the scene safely. I can tell you from years of experience that it is very frustrating when drivers are not paying attention to traffic direction. This not only slows down the process of getting traffic through the scene, but also increases the risk of a secondary crash.

If you are at a scene where it is your intent to turn, please turn on your directional light so we know exactly where you are trying to get. If we indicate to you that you are not able to make that turn, please respect that and understand that you will need to find an alternate route. Stopping in the middle of traffic to argue that you must go that direction will not improve your chances.

The most recent example of this occurred at a crash in which a large box truck was rolled over in the middle of the road blocking both lanes of traffic. A heavy duty tow truck was on one side of the road, a flatbed tow truck was on the other side of the road and they were working with their cables to remove the truck and debris. There were also two squads with their emergency lights in the road blocking the intersection along with deputies directing traffic. There was no way for anyone to travel down that stretch of road, yet some drivers still insisted on stopping in the middle of traffic to ask if they could get through after being directed to continue in a different direction.

Let me be clear, there will be no exceptions made when we close the road for a crash. We do not close the road to make it inconvenient for other drivers, we do it for everyone's safety. Failure to follow the direction of that law enforcement officer directing traffic is a violation of state statute and may result in a citation costing \$175.30 and 3 demerit points against your driver's license.

Finally, if a law enforcement officer is directing you, their direction supersedes the authority of any stop sign, traffic signal or other traffic sign. Please follow their direction so we can get you through that scene as efficiently as possible.

I ask for everyone's patience and extra attentiveness when coming upon these scenes. By working together we can make these scenes safe for everyone working in them as we work to keep Dodge County a safe and enjoyable place for everyone to live, work and visit.

Sheriff Dale J. Schmidt